United Nations A/C.4/58/SR.1

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
21 January 2004
English
Original: French

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 29 September 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Loedel ..... (Uruguay)

Contents

Election of officers

Organization of work

Other matters

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

03-53493 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Election of officers

1. **Mr. Droba** (Slovakia) nominated Mr. Cole (Ireland) for the post of Rapporteur.

2. *Mr. Cole (Ireland) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

3. **Ms. Price** (Canada) and **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) nominated Ms. Ognjanovac (Croatia) and Mr. Assaf (Lebanon), respectively, for the posts of Vice-Chairmen.

4. *Ms. Ognjanovac (Croatia) and Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

5. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that, with respect to the remaining post of Vice-Chairman, a number of technical problems had arisen regarding the submission of the nomination by the African Group. Therefore, he suggested postponing the election until a later date.

6. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work (A/C.4/58/1; A/C.4/58/L.1; A/C.4/58/INF/1)

7. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to document A/C.4/58/1, which contained a letter dated 19 September 2003 addressed to him from the President of the General Assembly informing him that at its 2nd plenary meeting the Assembly had decided to allocate 14 items to the Fourth Committee for its consideration. The Committee also had before it document A/C.4/58/L.1, which contained its programme of work with a proposed timetable.

8. He recalled a number of procedural rules to be followed by the Committee and noted that he intended to convene its meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and adjourn them at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. He hoped that all delegations would make a special effort to enable the Committee to begin and end its meetings on time and thereby improve its utilization of the conference facilities available to it. The Chairman of the Committee on Conferences had informed him that during the previous session the Fourth Committee had lost 15 hours and 55 minutes owing to late starts and early endings of meetings and had had a utilization factor of 63 per cent, which was below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent established by the Committee on Conferences.

9. He explained a number of aspects of the procedure he intended to follow in order to optimize the utilization of the resources available to the Committee. In that connection, he indicated that he would convene a meeting only when there were sufficient speakers on the list for that meeting, thereby enabling resources allocated to meetings cancelled sufficiently far in advance to be usefully redeployed. He recalled the General Assembly's decision to waive the quorum rule for opening a meeting, on the understanding that decisions would not be taken without a majority of members present.

10. He recalled various provisions concerning time limits for speakers, particularly those set out in General Assembly decision 34/401. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/221 B, he suggested that members' statements during the general debate should not exceed 10 minutes and statements on behalf of groups of delegations, should be confined to 15 minutes.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **The Chairman** also drew attention to other provisions of decision 34/401 relating, inter alia, to resolutions. He urged that submission deadlines should be respected so that the Secretariat would have sufficient time to prepare the programme budget implications of draft resolutions or decisions and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee would have time to review them in such a way as to avoid the cancellation or postponement of meetings. To prevent any misunderstandings, draft resolutions and decisions, amendments and the names of sponsors should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing, and an electronic version should also be submitted. Amendments to the text of the previous year's resolutions should be clearly indicated in order to speed up the document production process.

13. With regard to agenda item 86, "Questions relating to information", the General Assembly had requested the Fourth Committee to review the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The outcome of that review would be transmitted to the Fifth Committee.

14. He suggested that agenda item 5, "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", should be taken up by the Committee in June or July 2004.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chairman** said he took it the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.4/58/L.1.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **The Chairman** noted that, in addition to the agenda items allocated to the Committee, mentioned earlier, the General Assembly had decided that bodies and individuals having an interest in agenda item 32, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)", would be heard in the Fourth Committee in conjunction with the consideration of the item in plenary meetings. The Committee would be informed if any requests were received in that connection. With regard to agenda item 82, "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", as in previous sessions, the Committee would establish a working group of the whole to prepare the draft resolution to be submitted under that item. He suggested that the working group should be established immediately, should be chaired by the delegation of Chile and should be open to all interested members of the Committee.

19. *It was so decided.*

20. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that the list of speakers for the general debate on agenda items 12, 19, 87, 88, 89 and 90 relating to decolonization would be closed on 6 October, when the Committee would begin its substantive work.

21. He also informed members that, in accordance with established procedure, the General Assembly would take up in plenary meetings agenda item 19, "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples", after the Fourth Committee had completed its consideration of the item. Representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners would be heard as early as possible once the request for hearings had been distributed and approved. If he heard no objection, he would take it that such requests must be submitted by the chief elected representative of the Non-Self-Governing Territory.

22. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

23. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that, while he fully supported the idea of allocating certain agenda items to other technical committees, he disagreed with the conclusions arising from the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination concerning the abolition of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). A compromise solution should be found between maintaining the current agenda of the Committee and abolishing it altogether, such as allocating some of its agenda items to other Committees and allocating to it some agenda items from other Committees or from the General Assembly. The issue of agenda items was a generalized phenomenon that was in no way unique to the Fourth Committee, as had been evidenced at the first meeting of the First Committee, during which its Chairman had cited, inter alia, the question of Antarctica.

24. **Mr. Musonda** (Zambia) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Lebanon and expressed his opposition to the idea of abolishing the Committee, which dealt with special political issues and decolonization, when, as everyone knew, a dozen countries were still colonized or under colonial domination. Perhaps abolishing the Committee could be envisaged when all those countries were freed from the colonial yoke, but in the meantime it remained significant.

25. **Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez** (Mexico), endorsing the positions of the representatives of Lebanon and Zambia, said that her delegation had already expressed its views on the issue, particularly during the most recent informal consultations held by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Mexico took the view that the Fourth Committee was extremely important and should be strengthened by the allocation to it of items from the agenda of the plenary meetings of the General Assembly which required more in-depth and detailed consideration, such as the prevention of armed conflict.

26. **Mr. Maitland** (South Africa) supported the views expressed by the preceding speakers and pointed out that revitalizing the Committee did not necessarily mean abolishing it but rather giving it new life in the true sense of the word. At some point, when the Committee had concluded its consideration of the other items on the agenda, time would have to be set aside to

discuss the issue. Delegations must have their own ideas concerning the (many) agenda items which could be allocated to the Committee, in particular issues of specific political interest which, since they did not fall within the sphere of competence of a particular Committee, were briefly considered at plenary meetings at the Assembly. Those issues deserved more sustained attention from Member States, and the Fourth Committee could serve as a forum for that purpose. That could be part of what was meant by the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and it would be sensible, in view of the importance of the issue, to discuss the allocation of agenda items in the broader context of that revitalization. He hoped that he had not further complicated the task of the Chairman and apologized if that was the case.

27. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that his delegation wished to stress the importance of the statement made by the representative of Lebanon and to endorse the views expressed by the representatives of Zambia, Mexico and South Africa. Revitalization did not mean abolishing or consolidating extremely important items that had not yet been resolved by the United Nations. Revitalization meant giving new life to the United Nations and its Main Committees by restoring dynamism to their debates so that they could achieve satisfying results for all parties concerned. All revitalization efforts should be undertaken in a coordinated and synthetic manner without taking out-of-context decisions.

28. **The Chairman** said that, since the issue did not appear on the agenda but had aroused the interest of a number of delegations, it might be useful to hold an informal meeting to begin the debate in a more concrete fashion. If there was no objection, he would proceed in that manner.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.